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UNNATURAL ATTACHMENTS AMONG ANIMALS.

BY JOHN DEAN CATON, LL.D.

THERE is no accounting for tastes" is an aphorism as applicable to the lower orders of animals as to the genus Homo. It had reference to exceptional incidents in connection with the affections, the inclinations, or social relations.

I propose to make a few observations on abnormal exhibitions of these as occasionally exhibited in the lower animals. I should not refer to the devotion of the dog to his master or the attachment the canary bird manifests to its mistress who feeds and caresses it, for the first is so common as to suggest that it arises from a natural impulse in our nature, while the other may be an acknowledgment of benefits received. These, like the attachments of individuals for each other among the various species, being common, we may consider them as natural, or the result of some natural law; but it is the abnormal or unnatural attachments, those which seem to violate some natural law which attract our attention.

A remarkable instance of this unnatural attachment occurred under my own observation in my acclimatization grounds at Ottawa, Ill., between a male wapiti deer and a heifer. I will quote the account I gave of the occurrence in "The Antelope and Deer of America," p. 315: "When I had but one male elk with several females, a strong attachment grew up between the buck and a two-year-old Durham heifer, so that he abandoned the society of the female elk as the heifer did that of the cows in the same inclosure with which she had been reared, and devoted themselves exclusively to each other. When they laid down in the shade to ruminate they were always found close together, and when one got up to feed, the other would immediately follow. They kept away by themselves, always avoiding the society of all the other animals. Whenever the heifer was in season, which occurred quite regularly once a month; she accepted the embraces of the elk without showing an inclination to seek the other cattle; nor did this seem to be the result of any constraint. This intercourse continued throughout the summer, during the entire season of the growth of the antlers of the elk, but unfortunately he was killed before the rut commenced with the female elk. It is hardly necessary to state that no impregnation ever occurred from her

intercourse with the elk. As far as this instance may go to establish it, we may conclude that the constitutional differences between the elk and the cow are so great that they cannot successfully interbreed."

Here we find a double anomaly of a very pronounced character. It was not enough that one of these animals should have an unnatural inclination which might not occur in one individual in many thousands of either species, but both must be possessed of this extraordinary inclination or affection, and these two unnatural animals must happen to meet together under favorable circumstances before this phenomenon could occur.

We may find some excuse for the wapiti in the fact of which I was informed when I bought him in St. Louis; that he had been taken when very young and brought up by hand by a farmer in Western Missouri, where he had no doubt associated with the cattle on the farm and had never seen one of his own species till turned into my grounds. Several years' intimate association with cattle would strongly tend to reconcile him to their society, if it did not create a real attachment to them, and so was the way paved, to a certain extent, which led to this unnatural association, but it must be added that he never paid the least attention to the other cows in the grounds when they manifested the same condition which no doubt first attracted his attention to the heifer. As for the heifer, I can only say that there was no bull in the grounds, nor had she ever seen one, so far as I know.

These are poor apologies, I confess, for such strange and unnatural conduct.

I was presented with a couple of sand-hill cranes, and as they differed in voice and gait, I supposed they were a pair, but when both began to lay eggs I found my mistake. Till they were three or four years old they associated together, and seemed on friendly terms at least, after that they separated and were never found together as associates. One of these, for a whole summer, attached herself to the pigs which ran in an adjoining park, into which she managed to escape. She was their faithful attendant the whole day. When they went to the spring for water she went with them, and when they laid down to cool themselves in the rivulet, she would sit down close to them and patiently wait till they chose to get up and go to grazing. She never tried to lead them or control their action, but seemed only too happy to

be their humble attendant. As for the pigs, I never saw any evidence to show that they cared anything for the bird. If her society was tolerated without rudeness, I could see nothing to indicate that it was desired or even agreeable. Several times during the summer the bird was put into her own enclosure, when she seemed to spend her whole time wandering up and down the dividing fence looking for the pigs, and if they wandered around near the fence, she manifested the greatest satisfaction, while if they approached the fence, it seemed rather accidental, or to lay down in its shade, where they could find a dirtier bed than they could on the grass under the trees. At any rate the presence of the crane on the opposite side did not appear to be the least attractive to them.

This was clearly a case of unrequited love, but it only lasted for that one season.

Four years ago last spring, I brought from Honolulu two pairs of Hawaiian geese (*Bernicla sandvicensis*). These are small, pretty geese, easily domesticated, semi-aquatic in their habits, and of rather social disposition. They are only natives of the Island of Hawaii. They live in the high mountains among the lava beds, and never go to the sea though they are of strong flight and fly to considerable distances over the ocean. They are first mentioned in the account of Cook's first voyage at the time he discovered Hawaii, when he procured a specimen for the table. They become much attached to a person who pets them. When the gentleman in Honolulu presented me with one of the ganders which I brought home, he expressed great regret at parting with him, because, he said, every evening when he went home the bird met him at the gate, and accompanying him on the walk to the house, told him all that had transpired during his absence. They *talk* in a low, soft and winning way as if desirous of communicating something in the utmost confidence.

These birds are not as habitually gregarious as the common goose, still two or more were generally found together, and frequently all four were found associated, and it was quite common to find one away by itself.

The foot is not more than half webbed, and it was rare that they stayed in the water more than a few minutes, and they did not visit the pond frequently, sometimes not taking a bath for weeks. They are not good swimmers. I once saw one with

the tail depressed in the water, and soaking wet like that of a hen when she is thrown into the pond.

I never saw them eat an ounce of food ; they would sometimes pick a few crumbs of bread when thrown to them, but more frequently would drop them without swallowing. I never saw them eat grass or insects, or seek for food in the water. Indeed, what they live on has always been an unsatisfied question with me.

One pair of these birds was killed by a mink two years since. The male of the other pair disappeared last fall, and I could get no trace of him since ; the goose passed a lonely winter. In the spring she made her way to the pig-stye and attached herself to a brood sow which occupied a separate pen ; she never left her new-found friend for more than a few minutes at a time, and has never been known to go to the pond since, which is about one hundred yards distant. When the pigs were dropped, she seemed to take a great interest in the new family. But two survived. Of these she seemed to assume the entire charge by the time they were two weeks old. When she thought they needed an airing, she would drive them out of the pen on to the grass plat adjoining, and when they laid down together for a sun bath, she would get on to them and spread her wings over them as if to brood them. If a deer came near, she would chase it away with great resolution, and if a person approached, she would arouse her charge and drive them into the stye as quickly as possible. A small black-and-tan terrier is allowed to follow me into the park, and if he followed me up to the pen which adjoins the sty, she would go at him like a very fury, till he soon learned to avoid that neighborhood.

When the sow was removed and the pigs and the goose left in sole charge of the premises, she still continued in charge of the pigs, now grown to be good sized shoats, and so does she still, and they obey her orders without a moment's hesitation ; indeed, most commendable discipline is maintained in that family.

I look upon this as a very remarkable case of unnatural attachment, and have been much interested in observing it. I have no doubt it will continue till the pigs go to the shambles. What will the goose do then ? For the goose I can say that so long as she had a mate of her own species with whom she could associate, I never observed her to form any unnatural attachments. Why she did not seek consolation in her loneliness among some of the

other geese in the grounds, of which there are four distinct species, of course I cannot explain. We should certainly think it would have been more respectable and more natural. I hope the arrangements I have made will provide her associates of her own species, and if they arrive before the present attachment is broken off, I shall watch the effect with interest.

In former numbers of this journal have appeared accounts of unnatural attachments as extraordinary as those I have above described, but should I go beyond those within my own observation, I should not know where to stop, and could add nothing of value to my observations.

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BUTTERFLY HUNTING IN THE DESERT.

BY W. G. WRIGHT.

BEFORE the first whisk of daylight in the east we “pull out” for a trip of an hundred miles in the desert, on butterflies intent. The first twenty-two miles are a continual ascent, at first very easy, and later exceedingly steep, for this range of mountains bordering the fertile coast valleys of the three southern counties of California and separating them from the interior arid deserts, is, like all rocky and Andean ranges, precipitous on its western and gradual on its eastern slopes; so after we pass over the nearly level plain of the valley, the rise becomes more and more pronounced as we follow up the cañon forming the pass, and cross from side to side of its now meager run of water, through gullies, over ridges, around promontories and between cliffs, till on reaching the backbone of the range we find a formidable ascent of a thousand feet looming before us. Near here we pause to examine a cavity that was once a mammoth bee-hive; it is artificial, simply a bottle-shaped excavation in the solid rock some six feet in average diameter, and was intended for a cellar, but was closed up by a door and deserted when the settler’s claim was eventually abandoned; then it was taken possession of by an ambitious skip of bees, and tons of honey stored in the cool recess, but the bees became so numerous and aggressive as to become a terror, and they were therefore exterminated by regular siege. The cabin of the settler still stands, and is used as a school-house, and the cool cave is appropriated by the children for a play house.